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ABSTRACT

This overview of library services for pre-school and primary school children in Tanzania includes a brief description of the economic and educational situation of the country, an outline of the aims of library service to young children in Tanzania, a discussion of the responsibilities of library professionals in implementing library service aims, a review of the problems facing libraries in Tanzania (e.g., lack of suitable reading materials, lack of an organized distribution network for library materials, the absence of printing facilities), and a description of the programs undertaken by the Tanzanian Library Service to overcome such problems. Activities relating to library staffing, book exhibitions, and specific library programs for children (story telling, educational quizzes) are also briefly described. A reference list is included. (JL)

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THE ROLE OF TANZANIA LIBRARY SERVICE IN INFORMAL EDUCATION TO PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN TANZANIA

by

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Tanzania Library Service
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THE ROLE OF TANZANIA LIBRARY SERVICE IN INFORMAL EDUCATION TO PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN TANZANIA

BY NYALUSI, G.P.J.

Tanzania is located on the eastern side of the African continent. Her boundaries include Indian Ocean in the East; Kenya in the North; Uganda in the North West; Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire in the West; Zambia and Malawi in the South West and Mozambique in the South. It has an area of 391,082 square kilometres and a population of over 17 milion (1978 cencus) being the most populous in the defunct East African Community countries. The United Republic of Tanzania was born after the Zanzibar revolution in 1964. Thus Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Pemba island) united to form Tanzania. This union was masterminded by late Chairman of the Revolutionary Council Sheikh Abed Karume and President Nyerere. The union now is mature by having one Party - Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM).

The economy is mainly agricultural and much of the farming is manual and efforts are being made to machanize agriculture in order to commercialize it. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and industries roughly employ 85 per cent of the total labour force. The Government and CCM emphasize communal farming and industries in rural areas in order to raise the standard of living and agricultural production based on the principle of socialism and self reliance (Ujamaa).

Education is free from Primary to University level. In 1977 the government introduced universal primary education. There were 2 million Primary school pupils excluding private schools in 1976 as compared to 155,950 pupils on independence day in 1961. The villages are encouraged to build their own schools through self help schemes and the government assists them by providing roofing materials, furniture, staff and textbooks.[1]

There are extremely few primary schools and Kindergattens with libraries throughout the nation. However the Ministry of National Education through TLS has shown concern over informal education for children.

Tanzania Library Service complained in 1977 that reading among the adults was not encouraging. Of the 12 million people at the time only 124,090 were borrowing books from TLS branches for home reading.[2]

Some of the reasons put forward are lack of reading material, and generally many people have not cultivated the habit of reading.

The government launched the Adult Education Literacy campaign in 1970. The aim of the government is to make everyone become master of his environment while the majority of the people want education so that they can become clerks, teachers or any other office jobs. This is the situation. Now the trend of affairs cannot be left to continue. Something concrete has to take place from the grass roots. We have to instil into our children the contemporary philosophy of education that learning has no end - the more you learn the less you know. If we inculcate the habit of learning through books and other means into the fresh minds of our children we shall have made a great step forward. When they grow up they will look at every problem critically. In order to look at controversial issues rationally and make wise judgements one needs the right information. This paper then is an attempt to show the aims and problems of library service to children. It also attempts to suggest some ways which will facilitate the promotion of library service to children.

Many librarians and educators are convinced that the aims of library service to children are as follows:-

1. To make children learn how to think so that their convictions and opinions are formed and nurtured as a result of active brain work.
2. To make children preserve that fantastic capacity for candid feelings by broadening their interest in life and love for their neighbours.
3. To nurse them mentally so that they develop into mature individuals.
4. To inculcate into the children the notion that education is a life long process.

In order to fulfill the above mentioned objectives the whole nation has to be involved in one way or another. At the present time the task of shaping the minds of children is shouldered by the Ministry of National Education and Social Welfare. Involvement of more people in this task means formulating a national policy which will allow proper planning, organization and coordination of library provision to pre-schools and primary schools.

The technicalities will be left to librarians and educators and their prime responsibilities should be:-

(a) To know children, i.e. their interests, psychological and physical development.

(b) To know the right books for childrer.

A & B. Will involve the following:-[3]

(a) Scientific classification of young readers.

(b) Clearly defined criteria for measuring a child's literacy development.

(c) Knowing the historical back ground of the child at enrolment stage i.e. the card should show age, school attended, fovourite activities, parents' education, favourite school subjects. etc.

(d) Contacts with families and schools.

(e) To record important conversations, vital and pertinent information in order to open new ideas.

In implementing the aims of Pre-school and primary school education in Tanzania as other countries in the Third World have done, social and economic factors must be taken into account. The biggest problem facing Tanzania is shortage of funds for providing pre-school education. The pre-school education facilities available are for the rich families who can afford to pay school fees which range from T. Shs. 1,200 to 1,800 a year per child. In most cases these schools are located in the City of Dar es Salaam and big towns such as Mbeya, Moshi and Mwanza.

Also there are kindergattens run by missionaries and the Ministry of Social Welfare. Unfortunately the staff who run these kindergattens range from non-professionals to semiprofessionals. In fact nationally there is no clearly defined curriculum to be followed.
Problems facing TLS in providing informal education to pre-school children include.

(a) Lack of suitable reading materials.

(b) Lack of finance.

Tanzania Library Services as other educational institutions in the Third World face the chronic problem of lack of suitable books and other graphic materials with a local background. As pinpointed by participants to the Unesco Regional Training Course on Publishing Management held in Kenya - Nairobi from 14th August to 9th September 1972, the problems are:-

1. Lack of suitable reading material for the new literates emerging from the accelerated post - colonial educational programmes in all African countries. Where material is available from foreign countries, publishers are naturally interested in the commercial espects of publishing rather than in countributing towards national development. Local manuscripts are treated in the same manner. Thus the literary output is small, and consequently

new literates and the old too continue to read literature which is unsuitable for their environmental needs.

2. Lack of organized distribution network capable of absorbing the hoped for supply of both educational and general books particularly in rural areas.
3. Absence of adequate printing facilities for large scale book production in most African countries.
4. Lack of funds to finance the book industry.
5. Lack of serious government support for book industry.
6. Serious shortage of experienced educational writers, editors and illustrators especially of children's literature.

The establishment of the East African Literature Bureau in 1948 was a right step in solving the above problems. The institution had done a commendable job in promoting local literature not based on commercial lines. Unfortunately due to political bickering among the leaders the East African Community disintegrated in 1977. That was the end of East African Literature Bureau.[4]

Tanzania Library Service has realised that it cannot wait for miracles to happen in the industry. It was therefore started a book publishing programme and already several titles are in circulation although a good number of titles are suitable for adult consumption. However plans are in the pipeline to publish more literature for the young ones. This will be possible when the construction of the Printing and Binding Unit is completed.

Also, twice a year a periodical titled "Mapinduzi katika Uandishi" (Revolutionary Authorship) is published. The contents include, short stories, puzzles, cartoons, plays etc. This is encouraging because contributors in most cases are children themselves from all over the country. This is one way of training young children to become authors. This periodical is read by many children because the contents touch their daily activities and their familiar environments.

Undoubtely it will take a long time to provide suitable reading material for children without coordinated efforts of government ministries, religious bodies, private publishers, authors, book sellers and parastatal organizations. Therefore there is a need for an organization which will among other things be responsible for monitoring and coordinating literature for children. This organization may be named as the National Book Development Council.

STAFFING.

At present any professional staff is appointed to run the Children's library and in most cases they are female members of staff who can tolerate children's behaviour.

However it could be of much help to the children if they were served by librarians who have specialised in library work with children which include methods of studying, evaluating and interpreting children's literature.

Efforts to provide children with qualified staff in children's work is well advanced as a senior staff librarian is going to the United Kingdom for such training next year.

This shows how committed TLS is to developing young readers. It is hoped that when a national Library School offering diploma and degrees in Librarianship is established, courses in children's librarianship will be provided.

SERVICES TO CHILDREN

(a) Audiovisual aids:-
Pre-school and primary school children are shown educational films. This service is normally offered at the National Central Library. The service attracts many children may be because learning through books is harder to grasp than this method. However there are some children who cannot interpret events on the screen.

(b) Lending services.
This is carried out throughout the country where TLS branches exist. A child is allowed to borrow one to two books for home reading for a period of two weeks.

The documents issued cover the whole knowledge and creative literature. The acquisition of literature is determined by age and understanding of language. For children between five to seven years of age picture books are very popular. Primary school pupils aged between eight to sixteen years read books on adventure, mysteries and this is normally the case with boys. The girls of that age enjoy books on romance. Swahili books are extremely few for these type of readers.

Books on various subjects and written in simple language are acquired. For instance the 'Starters Books Series' which provide entertainment and information, introduce both preschool and primary school pupils to various countries, national characteristics, subjects, activities and historical areas of interests e.g. Starters Places: Kenya.

Reference books are used by primary school pupils although not very much. They include general works which answer simple questions and yet very important to children's inquisitive minds such as the 'what and why books' e.g. Tell me why by A. Leokum. These reference books include, dictionaries, encyclopeadias, atlases and maps. They are written in simple language and illustrated. For example the 'The pictorial atlas of the world.'

Periodicals are available to children in order to supplement the book collection. Coverage includes comics, youth organisations, sports, arts and general knowledge books which promote inquisitiveness among children. For instance, Challenge and Children's own from Kenya and Orbit from Zambia.[5]

BOOK EXHIBITIONS:

In Tanzania a book exhibition is a rare occasion. Most book exhibitions are staged by embassies and offices of high commissions. As such most books and pictures are of propaganda materials expecially so with the embassies of Eastern countries such as Korea and the USSR. The exhibitions are mainly meant for adult audiences. Most book exhibitions are staged at the National Central Library Dar es Salaam and occasionally up country.

It seems either booksellers have not realised the value of book exhibitions as one way of sales promotion or are hindered by the scarcity of books, maps and pictures due to youthfulness of the book industry and trade. They even do not or rarely produce publishers catalogues.

STORYTELLING:

This service is provided at least once a week and lasts for about one hour and is attended by both Pre-School and Primary School Pupils. This activity is enjoyed by many children possibly because librarians tell stories which touch their fields of interest. The stories include traditional folklore from various tribes within and outside the Republic.

On some occasions grandparents are welcome to the library to tell their stories to children. When the old man or woman cannot come to the library his story is taped and children have a chance to listen to. This activity is at experimental stage.

Moreover Radio Tanzania twice a week broadcasts a programme on informal education to children. Children of a chosen school tell stories and proverbs; sing songs and the rest of the children in Republic listen to. The exercise has a disadvantage. That is not all families own radio sets.

QUIZES

This service is offered to children in order to stimulate interest in current affairs of their nation and the world at large. Normally the service is more useful to primary school pupils than the pre school children.

There is need for much wider involvement of members of the republic in planning and organising the informal education through books etc which will speed up improvement in the intelligence quotient of children. In order to animate the candid feeling of the children which in the long run man / will bear fruits of peace which the modern / has miserably failed to achieve despite the creation of the United Nations Organization. It is suggested that leaders involved in children's work should press governments to allocate more funds for children's welfare both mentally and physically, and embark on projects of rewriting colonial books which ignored the indigenous history and culture.

FOOT NOTES

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